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ABSTRACT

Through the collaborative efforts of public health students and faculty, a state agency concerned with groundwater protection, and a local board of health, a video was produced on what local communities can do to protect groundwater from toxic contaminants. This document describes the planning and production stages of the film, emphasizing the collaborative effort and the student learning experiences involved in the project. Several tasks accomplished in the project are discussed, including: (1) obtaining a basic knowledge of groundwater problems; (2) determining the budget; (3) raising the necessary funds; (4) locating personnel to manage the technical production work; (5) writing the script; (6) developing graphics; (7) interviewing local officials and residents; (8) shooting the initial footage; and (9) editing the 40 hours of tape into a half hour program. The final section of the paper briefly outlines the distribution phase of the finished product. (TW)

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Abstract

This paper concerns the collaboration between public health students and faculty, a state agency concerned with groundwater protection and a local board of health in the development of a video film on groundwater protection. The theme of the film is, "What can the local community do to protect its groundwater from toxic contaminants." The film was funded by three agencies, the state agency, the local Area Health Education Council and the University of Massachusetts. The paper describes the planning and production stages of the film with emphasis on the collaborative effort and the student learning experience. The final section of the paper is a brief statement of the distribution phase of the film..

.....And Not a Drop to Drink

".....And Not a Drop to Drink" is a video film on ground water protection produced as a collaborative effort between a local Board of Health and the University of Massachusetts School of Public Health Departments of Community Health Education and Environmental Science.

The idea to produce the film grew out of my work as the Chair of a local Board of Health and Instructor in a graduate seminar on Community Organization and Development at the University of Massachusetts School of Public Health. I had, as a board of health member, been very concerned with developing an adequate aquifer protection regulation for a community that is rural and whose water is threatened by years of agricultural over use of pesticides.¹ Students in the seminar are required first to select a community public health problem, then to design and, if possible, implement a program. Three students volunteered to work on a film on groundwater protection. The theme of the film was to be, "What can the community do to protect their groundwater from toxic contaminants." The team, now composed of the three students and the instructor, decided that the health belief model offered a basic conceptual framework.² Namely that the severity of the problem, the susceptibility of local populations to the health risks from contaminated drinking water and the benefits of local action should all be emphasized. The film would act as the cue that would trigger appropriate health

behavior by making the members of the audience consciously aware of his/her feelings about the problem.

The Planning Stage

The first planning session led to several tasks. These were to obtain the necessary knowledge of groundwater problems,¹ to determine the amount of money necessary to produce a 30 minute film, how and where to raise the necessary funds, and finding someone to take charge of the technical aspects of production.

The first task was accomplished when the students visited a member of the environmental science program area who agreed to join the team and lend his expertise to the project. The second task involved a survey of local filmmakers to determine the steps involved in production and probable costs. The rest of the semester was taken up in writing grants which were submitted to various agencies and selecting a producer. Three agencies responded with funds for the film. These were, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality Engineering, a state agency charged with maintaining water quality, the Pioneer Valley Area Health Education Council, the University of Massachusetts which awarded the project a public service grant and the University Continuing Education Department. The team raised a total of eleven thousand (\$11,000) dollars and found a producer willing to produce the film for approximately three hundred and fifty dollars a minute. This cost was within our budget and considerably below the estimates we received from commercial groups. Since the semester had ended the students asked if they

could continue to work on the film on an independent study basis for the next academic year.

The project had now moved from the planning stage to production. At this juncture, the local board of health went to the district health board in which it held membership and the district board indorsed the project as a community health education effort that they would promote in their member communities.

The Department of Environmental Quality Engineering suggested that the film concentrate on three major water problems. These were; pesticide contamination, leakage from underground gasoline storage tanks and leachate from hazardous waste. Three sites for filming were selected. Whately, a rural town that lost its water to the pesticides EDB and Temik, Woburn, the site of seven recent leukemia deaths among school children, in which a recent study has linked to hazardous waste disposal and the Provincetown/Truro area on Cape Cod that has suffered water contamination from leaks in underground gasoline storage tanks. The film presented an additional concern that reflected the problems faced by the district health board, that of contamination of local aquifers from overdevelopment.

The Production Stage

Early in the fall of 1985, the team, consisting of the three students and the two faculty members, wrote the script. The script introduced the film with five graphics, which were

provided to inform the public about the nature and importance of ground water and to illustrate the four major sources of contamination.⁴

The design of the graphics was based upon a meeting of team members with a graphic artist. The students took a major role in defining for the artist the nature of an aquifer and how ground water becomes contaminated. The artist then developed the graphics on the computer. The team met with her, reviewed the graphics and suggested changes in the final product.

Next guided interviews were sketched out for each of the three sites. This part of the script both presented the problem and addressed the vulnerability of local communities to each of the three sources of contamination. The second part of the script was directed to the theme "you the citizen can save your communities water." Two fictionalized dramatizations were written to address this theme. The first of these was an interview and presentation of a petition by a concerned citizen. The second was a town meeting in which the tension between citizens concerned with the threat to their health from possible contamination of a local aquifer by over development and the developers was addressed. The high point of this drama was a confrontation between a town resident's concern for her childrens health and the attorney for the major real estate interest. This scene ended with a discussion which outlined steps town officials would take to legislate aquifer protection. The scripts ended

with a roll call of the towns and communities in the state that had already lost their drinking water to contamination.

The Production

The students contacted individuals at each site who would be available for interviews. These included members of local clean water advocacy groups, town officials responsible for community water and health and concerned citizens. Arrangements were made to interview some of these people on camera. The student members of the team then visited each site and took photographs of various onsite locations that could be used for camera shots. These photographs were evaluated by the team and the production director. They served as a guide to the camera crew directing them to the appropriate areas for the next stage, shooting the film.

The production team then visited each of the three sites and shot footage of the area and the interviews. The two dramatizations were staged in the film studios of Smith College. Actors were recruited from undergraduate drama majors at the local colleges and volunteers from the Amherst community. The final scene was an interview with a state official from the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering. He stressed the need for local communities to take action to protect their water.

The last aspect of production, and probably the most difficult, was the editing of about 40 hours of film into one coherent half hour product.

The Distribution

The distribution of the film is being handled by the department of Continuing Education. The film will be distributed at cost to interested groups, including town boards, schools and water advocacy groups. The team has prepared a flier describing the film that will be mailed out to these groups in the New York, New England area. The team has also prepared a brief brochure for health education and science teachers in the schools. This brochure walks them through the film and presents suggested study questions. Finally, an evaluation form has been prepared. This form will be sent out with the film with a request that they be returned to me.

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